

OUT OF BASIN TRANSFER COMMITTEE

MEETING PROCEEDINGS

Tuesday, February 25, 2003

Members Present:

Julia Forgue
Kevin Cute
Denise Burgess
Paul Corina
Jeff Hershberger
Pam Marchand
Henry Meyer
Alisa Richardson
Katherine Wallace

Members Absent:

Ken Burke
Mike Covellone
John Dubois
Herb Johnston
Stan Knox
Ed Szymanski
John Torgan

Water Resources Board Staff:

Connie McGreavy
Kathy Crawley

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Julia Forgue called the meeting together at 1:40PM.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Meyer agreed to take the minutes. Marchand agreed to take the minutes next month. Minutes of the January 15, 2003 meeting were approved subject to editorial comment. Richardson, recorder of the January meeting, agreed to explain the acronym "MEPA" in the final version of the minutes, which will be distributed prior to next month's meeting.

III. LEADERSHIP MEETING REPORT

McGreavy indicated that a meeting had been held of most of the committee heads with the idea of trying a new format for the various committees. The RI Water Resources Board (WRB) has distributed a CD, which details general tools for the various committee leads. Crawley stated that this should empower the leads to ensure membership involvement, task completion, and focus. Cute said that the committees should expand communication amongst themselves, especially at the leadership level.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

A. Definition of Out of Basin Transfers

Cute indicated that the RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) prohibits the diversion of “ground water from one salt pond watershed to another”. He said that this regulation does not address the transfer of water out of the Salt Pond SAMP region. Hershberger explained that there appeared to be some existing transfers out of the Salt Ponds Region. Meyer expressed confusion about out of basin transfers in the coastal areas. Meyer stated that water was being imported from United Water into the coastal areas, but he was unaware of any transfers out of the coastal areas into other watersheds.

Meyer said that he and Johnston had been away on vacation and had not been able to meet to discuss the various definitions. Meyer suggested that the USGS has established a series of definitions and that we could begin with that agency’s definitions including “return flow”. Hershberger stated that we might use the NRCS and USGS definitions. He presented a map of the Pawcatuck Watershed, which carries a Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 8 designation. The watershed in turn can be broken down into three HUC 10 basins or ten HUC 12 units.

Discussion, then, revolved around the issue of which basin definition should be used for applying out of basin transfers. Cute pointed out that the RI Rivers Council uses a HUC 12 designation as the smallest management level for a local river council. Richardson noted that the surface water and ground water divides in the boundary areas might not be identical. Wallace suggested that we might need a definition, which reflects that disconnect. Meyer and Richardson stated that ground water divides might be influenced by withdrawals especially in the boundary areas. Hershberger said that because of the difficulty of locating ground water divides, we should focus on surface water divides.

Referring back to the HUC 8 map, Cute asked if we should overlay the map with aquifers, political boundaries, sewer service areas, and water supply district boundaries and out of basin transfers. Hershberger stated that the map seemed to cover too large an area and that some of the Geographic Information System (GIS) data may be incorrect or out of date. The group turned its discussion to addressing what scale it should be using. Hershberger asked if we should focus on the HUC 12 scale. Meyer suggested that we should focus on sub watersheds where we have good data and use that area as a focus for developing our definitions. Crawley asked if there are any stressed basins. If so, what are the withdrawals that stress the basin? Wallace stated that the group should examine water district boundaries and sewer service areas. Burgess pointed out that the Town of South Kingstown picks up Kingston’s sewage.

McGreavy suggested taking a “generic definition” and applying it to the Pawcatuck. Richardson said that transfers become more critical when applied to smaller HUC 12 levels than with larger HUC 8 units. Cute said the map could show political boundaries and large transfers. Meyer suggested that we should first define a basin, then move on to defining a “stressed basin”. Richardson said that the model code defined an interbasin transfer as that involving any transfer of

water at the HUC 12 level. Cute pointed out that this would not work in the Special Area Management Plans (SAMP) areas. He stated that the Salt Ponds Region is made up of nine watersheds (smaller than HUC 12) associated with each of the coastal ponds. Richardson said that under MA code out of basin transfers, which involve a city that partially services another basin in the same city, are exempted. Forgue stated that MA exempted municipally owned systems. Hershberger pointed out that other states did not make any distinction concerning political boundaries in determining out of basin transfers.

The discussion turned to identification of what HUC level should be used for defining an out of basin transfer. For example, a withdrawal on the Chipuxet may have major significance at a HUC 12 level, while not having much effect at a HUC 8 level such as the entire Pawcatuck. The group indicated that though a HUC 12 based definition might be used in one area, we might have to utilize a HUC 10 definition in other watersheds. Cute stated that a HUC 12 based definition should work for the Narrow River Watershed, but that it probably would not fit the Salt Ponds Region.

The following definition of an out-of-basin transfer was used as a focus for further discussion and task assignment:

“Any transfer of any water for any purpose from any sub watershed (HUC 12) to another sub watershed. Sub watersheds are those basins delineated on a map of HUC 12 defined by USDA/USGS or as defined by CRMC in Salt Ponds Region SAMP.”

B. Interstate Agreements

Corina passed out copies of Westerly’s 1959 agreement with Pawcatuck. Marchand stated that Pawtucket’s agreement with Seekonk has expired and now works only on an emergency basis. Marchand stated that the agreement with Attleboro was never finalized. With regard to interconnections, Marchand stated that in Pawtucket, Pawtucket customers get first priority over others. Forgue, Marchand, and Meyer indicated that their respective systems do not have written agreements with neighboring systems. All had verbal arrangements for emergency interconnections with other systems for mutual aid. Marchand distributed copies of RI General Laws Chapter 46-15-5,6. This statute relates to the Water Resources Board concerning water supply to other states.

McGreavy wondered if we should address the issue of the state maintaining control of its waters. We need to look at CT and MA for standards regarding interstate transfers of water. There are two issues: water flowing into RI and water sent from RI to other states. We should invite representatives from CT and MA to our next gathering.

Discussion resumed around the need to determine what HUC unit to use as a test case for developing definitions. After further review of Hershberger’s map of the

entire Pawcatuck, the group determined that it should focus on one HUC 12 unit. Meyer suggested that we might utilize the Chipuxet which experiences a wide range of uses and types of withdrawal, including agriculture, public sewer systems, and municipal water supply. The Lower Pawcatuck with Westerly's withdrawal may serve as a better model for application to watersheds, such as the Blackstone where most of the withdrawal is for municipal supply. The group agreed to use HUC 12 units to identify issues associated with out of basin transfers in order to make recommendations for this and other watersheds.

C. Task Assignments

1. Forgue and Cute will call McGreavy's contacts in MA and CT to arrange a presentation at next month's meeting.
2. Meyer and Hershberger will review Hershberger's map of the watershed and focus in on the Chipuxet Subbasin (HUC 12). They will review the spreadsheets presented at this meeting. They will attempt to overlay water district boundaries, aquifer, sewer districts
3. Herb Johnston will be contacted for his input into the Chipuxet.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

A. WAPAC Mission Statement/Tasks

Kevin Cute recapped the mission statement and "deliverables" indicating that the committee was on track.

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was set for March 12, 2003 at the same location: Univ. of RI-Bay Campus, Building 19.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Henry Meyer
Kingston Water District

Date